

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND KICKS OFF 2009 SUMMER TRAVEL SEASON

BALTIMORE, MD – With Memorial Day weekend and the peak-travel season on the horizon, the Maryland Transportation Authority (**MDTA**) reminds motorists - Don't Wing It. Plan Ahead.

"Although traffic counts aren't expected to rise this year, roads are still busy, especially during peak travel times. Motorists should take the time to travel safely and plan their trips," said Authority Executive Secretary Ronald L. Freeland. "We urge drivers to travel during off-peak hours, ease their travel with *E-ZPass*® and call **1-877-BAYSPAN** (229-7726) or visit **baybridge.com** for 24/7 Bay Bridge traffic conditions."

Consistent with 2008 traffic figures, Authority officials expect the following number of vehicles to travel Maryland toll plazas between Friday, May 22, and Monday, May 25:

- William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial (Bay) Bridge (US 50/301) – more than 335,000.
- John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway (I-95) – more than 426,000.
- Fort McHenry Tunnel (I-95, I-395) – more than 470,000.

An additional 550,000 vehicles will travel the Francis Scott Key Bridge (I-695), the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel (I-895), the Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge (US 40) and the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge (US 301) combined.

The Authority offers the following travel tips for this holiday weekend and throughout the summer months:

- Travel off-peak and Explore the Shore! when heading to and from Ocean City. The best times to travel the **Bay Bridge** include:
 - o Thursday – before noon
 - o Friday – before noon and after 10 p.m.
 - o Saturday – before 7 a.m. and between 5 and 10 p.m.
 - o Sunday – between 7 and 11 a.m. and after 10 p.m.
 - o Memorial Day Monday – before 11 a.m. and after 10 p.m.
- Don't Wing It. Plan Ahead!
 - o Call **1-877-BAYSPAN** for 24/7 traffic conditions at the Bay Bridge.
 - o Visit **baybridge.com** to view live traffic cameras at the Bay Bridge and to sign up for traffic and email alerts.
 - o For traffic information statewide, visit **traffic.md.gov**.
- While heavy construction on the Bay Bridge will be suspended during peak summer-travel months, other preservation work is planned during limited daytime and overnight hours. The westbound speed limit is still 45 mph. **During two-way traffic, please use headlights and note the speed limit is reduced to 40 mph.**

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ADD ONE: 2009 MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

- Motorists towing trailers/boats are reminded that the new Bay Bridge toll rate for vehicles with three axles is \$9. Please visit **mdtransportationauthority.com** for new toll rates at all **MDTA** facilities. Rates for two-axle vehicles have not changed.
- *Stay Alert So No One Gets Hurt!*
 - o Devote your full attention to driving -- refrain from texting, cell phone and iPod use.
 - o Pace Your Space: Keep a safe following distance to avoid rear-end collisions.
 - o Obey posted speed limits and lane-control signals.
 - o Do not change lanes while traveling over bridges and through tunnels.
 - o Make sure your vehicle is “road ready”-- one disabled vehicle can cause extensive backups.

The Authority will lift construction-related lane closures at all toll facilities from Friday, May 22, at noon through Tuesday, May 26, at 7 a.m. The Maryland State Highway Administration will suspend construction and have additional emergency traffic patrols along routes to and from the Bay Bridge and Ocean City during the holiday weekend. Motorists should be aware of the following traffic patterns:

- At the **Fort McHenry Tunnel**, toll lane 9 (northbound) and toll lane 17 (southbound) are closed for the Toll Plaza Improvement Project.
- Travel lanes on the **Thomas J. Hatem Memorial Bridge** are reduced from two lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction for preservation work.
- New traffic patterns are in effect on portions of **I-95 between I-895 and MD 43** and on the **I-95/I-695 interchange ramps** in northeast Baltimore as part of the I-95 Express Toll LanesSM Project.

The **MDTA** Police will increase patrols during the holiday weekend. Officers will remain vigilant and target aggressive and impaired drivers, seatbelt violators and criminal activity. Citizens may report suspicious or unusual activity by calling the **1-800-429-TIPS (8477)**. The TIPS hotline is staffed 24/7 by members of the Maryland Joint Terrorism Task Force, of which **MDTA** Police are members.

The Maryland Transportation Authority is an independent State agency that finances, owns and operates the State's seven toll facilities. The Authority's eight Members, appointed by the Governor with consent of the State Senate, serve as the agency's policy-setting and governing body. Maryland's Secretary of Transportation serves as Authority Chairman.

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